

NAD President Scoggins Emcees VRS Demo on Capitol Hill U.S. Senate and House to Learn How VRS is Revolutionizing Communication

A News Release from the National Association of the Deaf

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Silver Spring, MD - The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is co-sponsoring, with Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDI), and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) a demonstration of Video Relay Service (VRS) in the United States Senate and House of Representatives on February 28 and March 1, 2007. NAD President Bobbie Beth Scoggins will emcee the event.

VRS is the first telecommunications relay service that enables individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing to communicate in American Sign Language (ASL) to their hearing family members, friends, and business associates. And, through VRS, hearing individuals can be in touch with deaf and hard of hearing loved ones and colleagues.

"We are so pleased to be able to demonstrate how VRS removes barriers to telephone communication, so vital to our every day lives," said NAD President Scoggins.

Using modern videophone technology, with a television and a high-speed Internet connection, a deaf or hard of hearing user places a VRS call by signing to a sign language interpreter, who then contacts the hearing user via a standard phone line and relays the conversation between the two parties.

Nancy J. Bloch, NAD chief executive officer, said, "Being able to communicate in American Sign Language when making telephone calls levels the playing field for deaf consumers. Interested persons attending this event will see how VRS works firsthand and gain a greater understanding and appreciation of its far-reaching value to the American deaf community."

"This is a life-altering service and technology for everyone who is deaf or hard of hearing," said Claude Stout of TDI and DHHCAN. "We are excited that members of Congress will get to see how VRS works, and envision the empowering benefits it brings to the everyday lives of deaf and hard of hearing Americans."

Senators Orrin G. Hatch and Tom Harkin are the honorary hosts of the demonstration in the Senate, and Congressmen Edward J. Markey and Fred Upton are the hosts in the House of Representatives.

Marlee Matlin, an Academy Award-winning actress who is deaf and uses VRS, will demonstrate the technology and explain the importance of VRS in her life.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires the provision of telecommunications services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, and VRS is rapidly becoming the service and technology of choice. The Federal Communications Commission administers the program that supports VRS and other telecommunications options for people with communication disabilities.

Members of the press are invited to attend the demonstrations on February 28 and March 1. The VRS Senate event will take place Wednesday, February 28, from noon until 2 p.m. EST, in room 325 of the Senate Russell Building, located at 1st and C Streets, N.E., Washington, DC. The VRS demonstration for the House of Representatives will take place on Thursday, March 1, from noon until 2 p.m. EST, in the Cannon Caucus Room in the Cannon House Office Building, located at 1st Street and Independence Avenue, S.E., in Washington, D.C.

For more information regarding the VRS demonstration, contact Jim House, TDI at jimhouse@tdi-online.org . or 301-589-3786 voice, or Ann Bardsley at 801-287-9897.

About NAD

The National Association of the Deaf, founded in 1880, safeguards the civil rights of deaf and hard of hearing Americans. As a national federation of state associations, individual members, and organizational and corporate affiliates, the advocacy work of the NAD encompasses a broad spectrum of areas including, but not limited to, accessibility, education, employment, healthcare, mental health,

rehabilitation, technology, telecommunications, and transportation. More information is available online at www.nad.org.

About TDI

The Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI) promotes equal access to telecommunications, media, and information technology for 31 million Americans who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and deaf-blind. TDI educates and encourages consumer involvement regarding legal rights to telecommunications accessibility; provides technical assistance and consultation to industry, associations, and individuals; encourages accessible applications of existing and emerging telecommunications and media technologies in all sectors of the community; advises on and promotes the uniformity of standards for telecommunications technologies; works in collaboration with other disability organizations, government, industry, and academia; develops and advocates national policies that support accessibility issues; and publishes "The GA-SK" quarterly news magazine and the annual Blue Book, TDI National Directory & Resource Guide for Equal Access in Telecommunications and Media for People Who Are Deaf, Late-Deafened, Hard-of-Hearing or Deaf-Blind.

About DHHCAN

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN), established in 1993, serves as the national coalition of organizations representing the interests for deaf and/or hard of hearing citizens in public policy and legislative issues relating to rights, quality of life, equal access, and self-representation. DHHCAN also provides a forum for proactive discussion on issues of importance and movement toward universal, barrier-free access with emphasis on quality, certification and standards. The member organizations of DHHCAN include the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB), the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA), the Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA), the American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC), the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD), Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), Deaf Seniors of America (DSA), Gallaudet University, Gallaudet University Alumni Association (GUAA), National Association of the Deaf (NAD), National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA), National Catholic Office of the Deaf (NCOD), Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI), USA Deaf Sports Federation (USADSF), and The Caption Center/WGBH.